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# Krieger's

## Wholesale Nursery

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Originators of

### EBONY KING

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# The Ebony King Blackberry

## General Information

The Ebony King, origination unknown, is an upright Blackberry which produces a very heavy crop of jet-black berries of the Eldorado type. The bushes are very strong and carry a heavy crop without breaking down.

In Southwest Michigan they have withstood winter temperatures of 22° below zero without any damage to the buds. The berries are large and firm and have the very sweet true blackberry flavor when ripe. Under test they have canned very successfully, and processors are well pleased with the flavor, size and canning qualities.

### CULTURAL INSTRUCTIONS

The Ebony King, like most upright Blackberries, is very shallow rooted, and when choosing a site for them, the soil should be of the sandy loam type. They will not root deep like trailing varieties, therefore, the soil should be well supplied with moisture.

As the roots grow mainly in the upper 4 inches of top soil, deep tillage should be avoided. Upright Blackberries will thrive and produce best crops under a complete mulch and will grow well in competition with low growing weeds and sod.

An additional quantity of nitrogen should be used when growing under the mulch system. Hay, straw, sawdust, peat moss and ground corn cobs are all good mulching material.

Planting distance in the garden when a single row is used, should be about 3 ft. apart in the row. For commercial plantings the best distance is about 8 to 9 ft. between the rows and 4 ft. in the row although rows 10 ft. wide would not be too great.

All sucker plants should be removed early in the season when the plant is still tender. If these are left to grow, especially when they are being grown under mulch, the field will become so dense that harvesting is almost impossible.

Blackberry sterility is a type of Blackberry plant which never produces fruit although it produces an abundance of flowers. Sterility is inherited in the plant when grown from root cuttings, and will never produce any fruit.

Sucker plants taken from fruit bearing bushes never divert to sterility. Root cuttings taken from 100% fruiting stock will divert to sterility at the rate of one or more plants to a thousand from the first generation of roots. By this is meant that the roots are taken from a fruiting size plant.

If the roots for propagation are cut from one or two year plants, as is usually done in a nursery, the percentage of sterile



Ebony King Blackberry one year after planting.

When berries are picked for processors, picking about once a week is required although when left this long some berries may fall to the ground, but the remainder will have gained additional size and weight to offset this loss. For the fresh market, picking every 3 or 4 days is necessary.

The life of a Blackberry plantation will vary all the way from 10 to 25 years, depending upon its location and soil fertility.

### STERILITY

plants seems to increase. If this practice of taking root cuttings from planting size stock is continued over a period of years, the fifth generation may produce 50% sterility; in ten years 75 to 90% may be present.

All upright Blackberries which have ever been propagated in our nursery have produced a certain percentage of sterility. The Eldorado seems to be more subject to it than some of the other upright varieties. In some check stock set out for fruit as high as 10% has been present in the second generation roots taken from one year old plants.

### ORIGIN

When labor was plentiful and cheap all Blackberry plants in the southwest Michigan area were taken from fruiting fields and sterility was unknown. As the fertility of the virgin soil ran low, the amount of sucker plants became less so a new method of propagation from root cuttings was introduced.

This method greatly increased plant production and cut labor costs considerably. Thus sterility was born and remained unnoticed for many years.

When it first showed up it was referred to as wild plants which had carelessly been mixed in with planting stock. To date no reason has been found for its presence and no cure available to stop it.

The result is that the upright Blackberry has practically disappeared in the Central and Eastern part of the United States due to lack of planting stock of fruitful varieties.

### SOLUTION

The only method of producing plants from root cuttings, free from sterility, is by rouging. To do this with any accuracy, the variety must have distinct foliage and plant characteristics other than the sterile plants.

The Early Harvest is one of these distinct varieties, so that sterile plants can very readily be detected and removed in the nursery row. This variety is not very hardy and will break down fast with disease, therefore, this variety is generally not very acceptable.



A cluster of sterile Blackberries.